

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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DRAFTED BY NEA/P:WBHARRIS:DP
APPROVED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN
PA/PRESS - MR. CARTER
H - MR. FLATEN (INFO)
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA/IAI - MR. SMITH
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM

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O 220055Z MAR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USCINCEUR

DOD
JCS
CIA
USIA
NSC

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD; TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - MARCH 21, 1978

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR MARCH 21. FYI ONLY,
OFFICER PRESENT TODAY WAS JOHN TRATTNER.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THE ISRAELI DECISION TO CEASE
FIRE FIRE IN LEBANON?

A. NO. I DON'T HAVE ANY COMMENT. WE NOTE DEVELOPMENTS
OUT THERE, BUT I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO OFFER YOU IN THE
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WAY OF A COMMENT ON THAT. THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAS CALLED
FOR A CEASE-FIRE AND, AS I SAY, WE EXPECTED THAT THE
ISRAELIS WOULD COMPLY. AND IF THEY ARE COMPLYING, WELL,
THAT MAKES US, OF COURSE QUITE SATISFIED AND HAPPY; BUT
THAT'S NOT IN THE WAY OF AN OFFICIAL COMMENT.

Q. THERE ARE DELIBERATIONS BY THE ARAB LEAGUE IN NEW YORK
TO TRY TO GET THE SECURITY COUNCIL TO TRY TO CONDEMN THE
ISRAELI INVASION TODAY. WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THIS?

A. WHERE WE STAND IS REPRESENTED OR REFLECTED IN OUR
INITIATIVE FOR THE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION THAT HAS

BEEN ADOPTED ON THIS WHOLE PROBLEM. I THINK THAT OUR
POSITION IS QUITE CLEAR THERE.

Q. WOULD YOU OPPOSE SUCH A CONDEMNATION? SUPPOSE, YOU
KNOW, IT WENT THROUGH TODAY.

A. I DON'T WANT TO TELL YOU WHAT WE WOULD DO IN ADVANCE
OF DOING IT. IN MATTERS INVOLVING SECURITY COUNCIL
ACTIONS, WE USUALLY WAIT AND OUR POSITION BECOMES KNOWN
AT THE TIME WE TAKE IT AND STATE IT, BUT NOT IN ADVANCE.

Q. WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN FRONT OF YOU ABOUT LEBANON?

A. WELL, I CAN GIVE YOU SOMETHING. FIRST OF ALL, ON

THE REFUGEE RELIEF THING, WE CAN DO THAT FIRST IF YOU'RE ALL AGREEABLE.

WE HAVE ARRANGED FOR THE AIRLIFT FROM BEIRUT BY COMMERCIAL CARRIER OF EMERGENCY RELIEF SUPPLIES, WHICH INCLUDE 1850 TENTS, 43,000 BLANKETS, AND SUCH THINGS AS POLYETHYLENE SHEETING, MEDICINES, WATER JUGS, AND THAT SORT OF THING -- ALL TO ARRIVE WITHIN THE NEXT 24 HOURS.

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IN ADDITION, THERE ARE TWO AMERICAN EMERGENCY RELIEF SPECIALISTS NOW IN BEIRUT; AND TOGETHER WITH THE STAFF OF OUR EMBASSY THERE, THEY ARE WORKING WITH THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES AS WELL AS WITH INTERNATIONAL AND PRIVATE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO DEVELOP A PLAN FOR ADDITIONAL AMERICAN ASSISTANCE.

THE FIRST SHIPMENT IS WORTH ABOUT 1.2 MILLION DOLLARS, EXCLUSIVE OF THE COST OF TRANSPORTING IT. I DON'T HAVE A FIGURE FOR THAT FOR YOU.

Q. ARE THOSE EMERGENCY RELIEF SPECIALISTS FROM THE UNITED STATES OR FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE OVER THERE? DO THEY PHYSICALLY COME FROM THE UNITED STATES?

A. I DON'T KNOW. I'M ASSUMING THESE ARE AID PEOPLE, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY ORIGINATED -- WHETHER THEY CAME FROM THIS COUNTRY OR WHETHER THEY WERE ALREADY OVERSEAS SOMEWHERE ELSE.

Q. ON THE FIRST SHIPMENT, WHERE DOES THAT MONEY COME FROM AND WHERE DOES THE STUFF COME FROM? I PRESUME IT COMES FROM NAPLES.

A. AGAIN, I HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN THE ORIGIN OF THE STUFF.

YESTERDAY I SAID I THOUGHT THAT THE MONEY WAS AID EMERGENCY OR DISASTER RELIEF MONEY, BUT I HAVE NOT BEEN CONTRADICTED BY THE EXPERTS SO I ASSUME THAT'S CORRECT.

Q. WHERE ARE THE PLANES COMING FROM, DO YOU KNOW?

A. THE PLANES? THESE ARE COMMERCIAL CARRIERS. AGAIN, IT UNCLASSIFIED

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WOULD BE NICE FOR ME TO GIVE THAT TO YOU, BUT I HAVE NOT BEEN PROVIDED IT. LET ME TRY TO GET THAT STUFF FOR YOU AS SOON AS I CAN THIS AFTERNOON.

Q. DO YOU HAVE A FIGURE FOR THE TOTAL AID? YOU SAID THE FIRST SHIPMENT IS 1.2 MILLION.

A. YES, AND I SAID YESTERDAY THAT IT WOULD INVOLVE SEVERAL MILLION DOLLARS; AND I CAN'T BE MORE PRECISE ON THAT FOR YOU AT THE MOMENT.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING FURTHER ON THE LEBANESE SITUATION?

A. WELL, I COULD OFFER YOU WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING THE PEACEKEEPING FORCE AS THE NEXT ITEM.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, AS SOME OF YOU KNOW, IN HIS REPORT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL MARCH 19, PRELIMINARILY ESTIMATED THAT THE UNITED NATIONS FORCE IN LEBANON SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST FIVE BATTALIONS WITH A TOTAL STRENGTH OF 4,000, INCLUDING LOGISTICS PERSONNEL. I THINK IT WAS 3,000 WITHOUT THEM.

THE UN IS IN THE PROCESS OF CONTACTING A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES TO REQUEST THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE FORCE. MR. WALDHEIM WILL BE CONSULTING WITH THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THAT. IT'S OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE FIRST ELEMENTS WILL BE DRAWN OR MAY BE DRAWN FROM UN FORCES ON THE GOLAN AND IN THE SINAI -- AT LEAST, INITIALLY. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THIS IS ONLY A TEMPORARY DRAWDOWN ON THE UNDO AND UNEF FORCES THERE. BUT I THINK THE REAL DETAILS OF THIS ARE GOING TO HAVE TO COME FROM THE UN SPOKESMAN. WE HAVE TOLD THE UNITED NATIONS THAT IF WE ARE ASKED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO ASSIST IN AIRLIFTING NATIONAL CONTINGENTS -- THAT IS, OTHER NATIONAL CONTINGENTS -- TO THE AREA OF UNCLASSIFIED

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CONFLICT SO THEY CAN BE INTRODUCED INTO THE AREA AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. WE HAVE TRADITIONALLY PARTICIPATED IN THE AIRLIFTING OF US PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS, BUT WE ARE

AWAITING THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S POSSIBLE FORMAL REQUEST FOR THIS ASSISTANCE. WE HAVE, OF COURSE, NOT DONE ANYTHING YET.

Q. THIS HAS BEEN SAID PROBABLY, BUT WHICH COUNTRIES ARE YOU CONTACTING ABOUT POSSIBLY CONTRIBUTING TO UNIFIL?

A. WELL, WE ARE NOT CONTACTING ANYBODY.

Q. I MEAN AT THE UN.

A. THAT'S SOMETHING THAT'S GOING TO HAVE TO COME FROM THE UN. I DON'T WANT TO PRESUME TO SPEAK FOR WHAT MR. WALDHEIM IS DOING. I THINK HIS SPOKESMAN OUGHT TO DO THAT.

Q. HAVE YOU HAD ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION ABOUT WHO IS GOING TO PAY FOR THIS PEACEKEEPING FORCE?

A. NOT THAT I KNOW OF.

Q. ARE YOU AWARE OR DO YOU KNOW OR HAVE THEY TOLD YOU THAT THEY'RE NOT GOING TO CONTRIBUTE?

A. I DON'T THINK THEY'VE TOLD US IN ANY OFFICIAL WAY. I'VE SEEN STORIES THAT PORTRAY THEIR ATTITUDE AS NOT BEING TERRIBLY WILLING TO DO SO, BUT I HAVE NOTHING OFFICIAL FOR YOU ON IT.

Q. IS IT THE VIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATION THAT WHAT HAS UNCLASSIFIED

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BEEN DECIDED BY THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL IS NOW SUFFICIENT TO SATISFY ISRAEL'S SECURITY REQUIREMENTS.

A. YES.

Q. YOU SAID THAT POSSIBLY OTHER CONDITIONS SHOULD BE APPLIED.

A. NO. I THINK THAT IF YOU'RE ASKING ME IF WHAT THE COUNCIL HAS DONE SUNDAY FULFILLS WHAT WE SEE AS THE NEED, THE ANSWER IS YES.

Q. HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING CONDITIONALLY FROM THE --

Q. IS IT AS ON PAPER -- JUST THE CALL ITSELF, OR WHEN IMPLEMENTED?

A. I THINK OBVIOUSLY WHEN IMPLEMENTED.

Q. HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING OFFICIALLY FROM ISRAEL AS TO THEIR ATTITUDE AS TO THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE MANDATE OF THE FORCE?

A. NO. I HAVE NOTHING THAT I CAN TELL YOU THAT THEY'VE TOLD US OFFICIALLY. WE NOTE WHAT THEY HAVE SAID IN PUBLIC, AS REPORTED IN THE PRESS.

Q. AND DOES THIS LEAD YOU TO BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE GOING TO BE SATISFIED WITH IT?

A. I DON'T THINK I WOULD WANT TO BE LED TO BELIEVE ANYTHING FROM HERE RIGHT NOW ON THAT. I THINK WE JUST HAVE TO AWAIT DEVELOPMENTS.

Q. WHEN THE UN MANDATE, AS EXPRESSED IN THE RESOLUTION IS

IMPLEMENTED, YOU WOULD THEN, IF I GOT THE MESSAGE RIGHT,
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EXPECT THE ISRAELIS TO COMPLY; IS THAT RIGHT? YOU EXPECT
THE ISRAELIS TO LEAVE NOW OR WHEN THE UN MANDATE IS IM-
PLEMENTED?

A. I THOUGHT THE QUESTION WAS DO WE THINK THAT WHAT THE
COUNCIL HAS DONE, WHEN IMPLEMENTED, FULFILLS THE BILL
FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW. THE ANSWER TO THAT IS YES.

Q. ALL RIGHT. LET'S TAKE IT A LITTLE FURTHER THEN. DO
YOU EXPECT THE ISRAELIS TO LEAVE BEFORE THE IMPLEMENTATION
THAT WOULD THEN PROVIDE THE SECURITY THAT YOU THINK IS
REQUIRED?

A. I DON'T WANT TO SAY WHEN WE EXPECT THEM TO LEAVE. ONE
STATEMENT THAT WE HAVE ALREADY MADE IS THAT WE EXPECT THE
ISRAELIS TO LEAVE, FULL STOP.

NOW, THE ANSWER TO ALL THE QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW WE EXPECT
THIS OR HOW IT SHOULD BE DONE -- WHEN AND IN CONJUNCTION
WITH WHAT OTHER MOVEMENTS AND ACTIONS -- WE HAVE NOT BEEN
WILLING TO ELUCIDATE THAT FOR YOU, AND I THINK I'M STILL
ON THAT POSITION. IT IS BEING DISCUSSED; IT WAS BEING
DISCUSSED YESTERDAY.

Q. THEN LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY: IS THERE A REALISTIC
EXPECTATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION THAT ISRAEL WILL LEAVE
SHORTLY? OR I CAN PUT IT ANOTHER WAY -- BEFORE THE IM-
PLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTION.

A. I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO PROFFER YOU A REAL ANSWER
TO THAT OTHER THAN TO SAY I DON'T KNOW; I'M NOT IN A
POSITION TO SAY. I THINK I PREFER THE LATTER.

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Q. DOES THAT EXHAUST YOUR STATE OF INFORMATION ON THE
MIDDLE EAST?

A. LETS SEE WHAT ELSE THERE IS. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED
IN WHAT WE KNOW TO BE THE CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION IN
SOUTHERN LEBANON, I COULD GIVE YOU THAT.

Q. YES.

A. AGAIN, I DON'T KNOW HOW THIS MATCHES WITH WHAT'S THE
MOST LATEST REPORTS, BUT THE ISRAELIS NOW HOLD MOST
OF THE TERRITORY SOUTH OF THE LITANI RIVER WITH THE EX-

CEPTION OF TYRE AND THE COASTAL ROAD FROM TYRE NORTH-
WARD. THAT ROAD REMAINS APPARENTLY OPEN BUT IS UNDER
ISRAELI GUNS.

TO THE EAST, ISRAELI FORCES HAVE MOVED INTO THE FOOT-
HILLS OF MT. HERMON AND ARE NEAR THE TOWN OF HASBAYA.
ISRAELI UNITS HAVE NOT CROSSED THE LITANI RIVER, BUT
ISRAELI ARTILLERY AND AIRCRAFT HAVE CONTINUED TO ATTACK
POSITIONS NORTH OF THE RIVER FROM WHICH FIRING INTO
ISRAEL HAS CONTINUED.

THE LAST NOTE I HAVE HERE IS THAT, IN GENERAL, THE MILITARY
ACTION IS LIGHTER THAN IT HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY.

Q. WAIT A MINUTE, JOHN, COULD YOU CLARIFY THAT? ARE YOU
SAYING THAT ARTILLERY POSITIONS NORTH OF THE LITANI ARE
FIRING INTO ISRAEL?

A. THAT'S MY INFORMATION, YES. THAT IS MY UNDERSTANDING
FROM WHAT I'VE READ, THAT SOME SHELLS ARE DROPPING INTO
NORTHERN ISRAEL.

Q. BUT THERE ISN'T GOING TO BE A CEASE-FIRE, IS THERE?

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A. WELL, I'M NOT IN A GOOD POSITION TO TELL YOU THAT.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON WHETHER THE ROAD FROM TYRE
TO THE NORTH, WHILE WITHIN RANGE OF ISRAELI POSITIONS I
THINK ON THE HIGH GROUND -- ARE THEY FIRING AT THE ROAD;
ARE THEY LETTING THINGS MOVE ON THE ROAD?

A. TO THE BEST OF MY PERSONAL UNDERSTANDING, YES, THEY ARE
LETTING THINGS MOVE; BUT I THINK THEY HAVE THE
POTENTIAL NOT TO. I THINK THAT'S WHAT THIS MEANS -- NOT
TO LET THINGS MOVE OR TO MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY CASUALTY REPORTS?

A. NO, I DON'T.

Q. YOU DIDN'T REACT TO THE ISRAELI CEASE FIRE
DECISION. ARE YOU GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH THE WAY THAT
ISRAEL HAS REACTED SINCE THE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION?
HAS ISRAEL DONE WHAT WAS EXPECTED OF HER OR HAVE THERE
BEEN ANY PROBLEMS?

A. SINCE I REALLY DON'T KNOW IN ANY GREAT DETAIL -- IN
ANY DETAIL AT ALL -- WHAT IS HAPPENING OUT THERE, I'M
REALLY NOT EQUIPPED TO ANSWER YOU.

Q. IT WAS ANNOUNCED ABOUT AN HOUR AGO OR SO THAT WEIZMAN
HAD ANNOUNCED A COMPLETE CEASEFIRE.

A. OK. BUT AS I'M SAYING, WHAT'S ACTUALLY HAPPENING OUT
THERE -- I'M NOT CASTING DOUBT ON THAT OR ANNOUNCING A
DECISION. I'M SIMPLY SAYING I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING
OUT THERE SO I CAN'T ANSWER YOUR QUESTION: ARE WE PLEASED
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WITH WHAT'S GOING ON. NOW, LATER ON, TOMORROW, WHEN WE KNOW
MORE ABOUT IT, MAYBE WE CAN ANSWER THAT.

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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